

3-20-1984

Interview with Arlie Winchester (FA 23)

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Western Kentucky University, mssfa@wku.edu

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Recommended Citation

Folklife Archives, Manuscripts &, "Interview with Arlie Winchester (FA 23)" (1984). *FA Oral Histories*. Paper 327.
https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_fa_oral_hist/327

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Blackburn: We're talking with Arley Winchester, and like I said, what we're interested in, we're from Western, we're from a folklore group that came down. We've been talking to people and we're just interested in what it was like to grow up around here. Could you tell us, maybe, a little bit about your life, things that you did, and what it was like growing up in the country?

Winchester: Well it was kindly rough, hard time when I growed up. It was back in. . . take '28 to '30 through there, it was Depression; it was hard to get by then. We, I had milk cows, milk cows and got our milk. And fatten hogs and killed them. Growned about everything we eat. Growned corn, took it to the mill and had it ground for meal. [Pause]

When you got any work, I worked for a farmer, for 50¢ a day, and I would hunt of the night, catch pelts and sell them and get money. It very hard to survive back then.

Blackburn: Did you live on a farm?

Winchester: Uh huh, yeah, 'Bout 150 acres, something or other, but that's not all counted but about 50 acres, something or other. Ten of them. . .

Blackburn: What kind of crops did you grow?

Winchester: ^{50%} This corn, and hay. We'd plant two kinds of corn; we'd plant yellow corn for the stock, and white corn to make bread out of. [Pause]

I'd catch fur of the night, you could sell it. I believe got 'bout 25 to 35¢ for a opossum. A fox, about \$2.00 for a fox. Coons, about \$2.00. And sometimes I'd hunt all night, sleep of the day, and get ready to go back the next night, see if I could find some more.

That's about, well, you was talking about a mill, they had a mill across, where you grind the meal; there's a water mill, it's run by water power, a big wheel. And they sawed lumber there, and anybody died in the country there, why they kept poplar lumber there and they'd make caskets right there, they wouldn't, far as I know, no undertakers there.

Blackburn: Somebody yesterday was telling us about a man, what was his name?, said that Crabtree, a man named Crabtree or something, that he was supposed to have been dead or something and they saw his eye wink, or something, he kept. . .

Winchester: Yeah

Blackburn: Do you know anything about that?

Winchester: It was John Crabtree, a fellow shot him. And they laid him out to be dead. And course like I said, they didn't have any undertakers or anything, they just, people of the community went in and they had his casket made and everything, ready to bury him. And they seen his eye move or something another and, and they discovered he's still alive, and they didn't bury him. I seen him a lot of times after that; he was a preacher.

Blackburn: mmm

Winchester: He used to have ~~church~~ at his house, I've been there. And they said he, I don't know as I heard him say it, but they said he kept that casket and took the lining out of it to put ^{father} beans in. They used to grow them beans and keep them to eat through the winter. What they called ^{father} beans.

Blackburn: That's what somebody told us yesterday, a man named Howard Blevins, do you know him?

Winchester: Yeah. I knowed him.

Blackburn: We talked to him yesterday, and he told us about it. Do, what kind of, do you know what kind of games that you played when you were little?

Winchester: Well, we played basketball and volley ball, when I went to school. They, we just had a one-room school house; everybody in the same room. We didn't have no floor, it just a dirt court like outside there, when it'd rain like this [it was raining outside at the time] you couldn't play ball. But when it dried up, why we'd.

Brock: What was the name of this school? Where was it located?

Winchester: At Parmesville

Brock: Was it?

Winchester: Uh huh [yes], It's out here east, 'bout 15 miles.

Belcher: Somebody told me that they thought that the one-room schools was better because from first grade on you watched them explain it to the other grade. Do you agree with that?

Winchester: Well --

Belcher: --That they were better?

Winchester: Well, I'd say its as good if not better. And they finally got a, built a high school room up there; they just had one room in that, when we went to school.

Brock: Do you know any stories about the community around here, about events that's taken place? That's happened here?

Blackburn: Like, have you ever heard any, did your Grandmother or Mother ever tell you any Civil War stories, about any guerillas, or anything like that that came through here?

Winchester: Well, they ~~had~~ the Civil War, I guess. Up above where I live, they called it the "horse holler," they hid horses out up in there, they said. I've heard my Mother talk about it. That's about all, I know about it.

Blackburn: There was a, there was a guy talking in one group, was there a lot of, a lot of oil digging done around here a long time?

Winchester: Out there there was. (Pointing to the South) One time they considered that for the County (Wayne) Seat in the place in Monticello here, there's a big oil boom out in there, and lotta oil wells. And then they changed it. That's what I heard, had it here. But it used to be a Baptist place out there, when all the oil wells were out there.

Belcher: Did, what games did you play when you were smaller? Did you play before you were old enough to play basketball, and all?

Winchester: We had a, I don't know, a soft ball or something that we played, you know, batted. That's, that's about all.

And we used to play hound and fox. While the hound was after the fox, one fellow'd run and all the rest after him barking like dogs. . . (laughter) . . . through the woods. That was one game I remember we played.

We'd do that through, you know, recesses, we had three. A morning recess, and I believe it was about fourty-five minutes. At twelve, we had an hour. And at, I believe around two o'clock we had about a fourty minute recess or something.

Blackburn: A man was telling us yesterday about box suppers and something, or something like that?

Winchester: Yea, the used to, when the wanted to, the teachers would have box suppers at these schools where they wanted to raise some extra money for something or another. They'd have these box suppers. People'd come in and buy their boxes, they had a auctioneer, just like they do, and hold them up. They'd decorate them up with this crepe paper, different colors, and put bows on them and stuff. They'd run anywhere from 50¢ to \$3.00 cause money was scarce back then.

Then they had, somebody'd put up the ugliest man, and get, I believe, was a penny a vote on it. And the prettiest girl.

Blackburn: Was, was, when the Depression hit around here was it real hard? Did it hit real hard around this area?

Winchester: Yea it was, it was just awful hard. You could take a, for instance, you could take, you could buy a shirt for 49¢. A pair of overalls, most people wore overalls then; there, overall pants for 98¢. And shoes for \$1.98. And they's good shoes, as good as you get now, I'd say.

Belcher: Do you remember the first pair of tennis shoes that you saw?

Winchester: Yea, but I don't remember when it was. I mean when we started playing ball, basketball, we had to have tennis shoes and, Odel Campbell was the coach out there, he was a high school teacher. And Ace Coubern Brown was a grade school teacher, and Nell Morris was a teacher out there.

Blackburn: What kind of music when you were younger did you listen to? What kind of music was played?

Winchester: Well, fiddle, banjo, and a guitar. They used to burcade and them get together and have kind of a party and square dance. I have been to them. That's the kind of music we used.

And the radio came out. I don't, I believe, I didn't see it, but my Mother said they had something that'd put over her ears usually. You couldn't hear it out, just set it out. Then I know they came out a battery radio, at.

Blackburn: Did you all have a radio?

Winchester: No. we didn't have a radio.

Belcher: What kind of toys did you play with at home?

Winchester: I don't believe I ever had any toys. We'd make a, we did make a wagon out of a, we'd go out in the woods and saw down a tree, and bore a hole in there and whittled us out a axle and put through there, and made us a truck we called it. Four wheels, we'd ride it, get the slant and ride it over that slant.

Belcher: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Winchester: I had one brother.

And we used to have a little old, we'd off of a, they had these old wagons, mule wagon. And they's a rim went around the hub of that wagon. When one would tear up or something or other, we'd get them, and make us a clip went over that thing around.

Brock: Well how has the community changed, you know, something they have now and say something they had 30 years ago, how has it changed?

Winchester: Aw, its, its changed a lot. I mean there's a lot of people out there then. Course I never was around town here, I believe the first time I ever came to Monticello I was about 15 years old. Had to come in a wagon, our mule and wagon. We'd come in here and, and they would, and buy flour, and stuff that they had to have through the summer. Make one trip, or two trips a year, and that was. . (pause)

(simultaneously)

Belcher: Did you all,

Winchester: And

Belcher: Oh, sorry.

Winchester: And, maybe in the spring of the year, and end of fall, they come to town and buy, try to buy enough, you know of whatever they needed.

And they'd well to carry the mail out there, a fellow rode a horse. From there to the Pike, they called it the Pike out here, but it was just a gravel road. They'd carry it, carry the mail on a horse back though there.

Belcher: You said a wagon a minute ago, did you all have to make your own wagon or?

Winchester: No, they'd buy the wagons down here at, it was a fellow by the name of George Higgins used to sell wagons here in Monticello. I believe about \$90 you could buy a wagon.

Made salt, come in big old barrels, about the size of these fifty-five gallon drums now, but they was wood, and they was tapered at each end and big in the middle, and get a whole barrel of that salt for, maybe \$2.00 or something like that.

You'd have to, when you killed your meat, well, you'd have to salt it down, have it, what they'd the smoke house, kept that meat in. Leave it lay there til it took salt, and then they'd hang it up, had something across the top, and hang that meat up.